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Japanese Catholic Counc. at UN Decolonization

JAPANESE CATHOLIC COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

c/o Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, 2-10-10 Shiomi, Koto-ku, Tokyo 135 Japan

Statement on East Timor to the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization

From Aloisius Soma, former Bishop of Nagoya and former President, Japanese Catholic Council for Justice and Peace. Presented by Mr. Kan Akatani.

Some 19 years have already passed since Indonesia, in violation of International Law, invaded East Timor. Although the East Timor issue has drawn international attention since the deplorable Santa Cruz Massacre of three years ago, when it is asked whether Indonesia is trying to change its policies towards East Timor, the answer has to be a clear "no". Although on the surface and temporarily, it may be taking a "more open" policy towards East Timor, the information reaching our Council from East Timor is that the pressure of the military on citizens at large and on the Catholic Church is only increasing, and the "Indonesianization" is moving with greater acceleration through such measures as emigration, so that a solution in line with international law is called for at the earliest possible time.

I attended the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor held at the University of the Philippines in Manila between 31 May and 4 June of this year. I believe that many of you are aware of the what happened at this Conference. The Philippine Government under pressure from the Indonesian Government issued "Refusal of Entry" to many foreign participants to this Conference. I, too, was refused the right to board the Pakistan International Airway plane at the scheduled time of departure. Fortunately for me, Jaime Cardinal Sin of the Philippine Catholic Church interceded on my behalf with the Philippine Government and made my attendance possible. I wish to use this occasion to express my sincere appreciation and admiration for my Catholic colleagues in the Philippines for taking the course of justice under incredibly intense political pressure.

The Conference on its last day passed 18 resolutions the most important of which are the following:

* Calls for the release of Xanana Gusmao and all political prisoners and for Xanana's participation in negotiations to resolve the East Timor situation.

* Advocates an immediate cease-fire, the complete demilitarization of East Timor, a fair and honest referendum under supervision of the United Nations.

* Supports CNRM's peace proposal and other East Timorese groups' initiatives for genuine self-determination.

* Requests UNHRC Special Rapporteur on Torture to consult women in East Timor regarding atrocities against women, sexual violence/rape by Indonesian military in East Timor.

* Condemns Indonesia's forced birth control and aggressive family planning program in East Timor.

* Extends our solidarity to the women of East Timor.

* Urges the Indonesian Government to uphold its own promise to allow expanded access to East Timor for Human Rights and Humanitarian organizations, the media, and UN special rapporteurs.

* Expresses support to the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia.

* Recognizes East Timor as a sovereign people and nation.

* Affirm our commitment to help in the struggle of the Maubere people for genuine liberation in any way we can.

At the Conference I made a joint appeal for East Timor on behalf of the participants from the Asia-Pacific Region. I appealed to Indonesia to resolve the East Timor issue peaceably, as soon as possible, in line with the ideals expressed at the time of Indonesia's founding and the principles of the United Nations. I added

that "When the people of East Timor achieve their independence, they do not want to be opposed to Indonesia as an enemy, but wish to create friendly and peaceful relations with Indonesia." And addressing the United Nations, I asked them to carry out their work in decolonization, which is one of their ideals, with even greater vigor than heretofore, and to convince Indonesia, that the liberation of "East Timor", although a small country of Asia, was important to the world and to Asia.

In conclusion, I crave your forgiveness in touching on a personal matter. At the present time I am a retired bishop, and have been relieved of all ecclesial duties. However, I wish to say that I intend to exert all my efforts from now on, so that my sisters and brothers on East Timor attain true happiness. I gather that Jaime Cardinal Sin, the Primate of the Philippines, deplored the undemocratic and inhumane action taken by the Philippine Government in connection with the above Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor and conveyed them to Bishop Belo in East Timor. In the resolution of the East Timor question, the time has come to do away with all manner of political and religious manoeuvering. The time has come for the United Nations to recognize anew that it is its true function to push for the resolution of this question.

I wish to close my statement by asking the United Nations to exert their best efforts towards that end.

I thank you for your kind attention.